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ABSTRACT

This book explains the episodic changes in the meaning of "profession" and its cognates in the United States from 1600 to the present. An introduction states the book's central theses, that the meaning of the word "profession" has changed episodically in American history, that these changes in meaning were directly informed by the nature of the preeminent vocation to which the term conventionally referred at the time, and that the conventional meaning of the term reflexively informed the nature of that preeminent vocation. Following the introduction, three more sections describe the history of the meaning of profession under the following titles: "1600-1760s: Theology and the Profession of Service"; "1720s-1870s: Law and the Professional Polity"; "1860s-1910s: Science and Education: 'Professor' becomes 'Professional'". The conclusion argues that out of the history of the meaning of professional the true professional ideal emerges by the beginning of the 20th century. In that context a profession is a dignified occupation espousing an ethic of service, organized into an association, and practicing functional science. Included are three appendixes, an index of cases cited, an index of authors and sources, and an index of subjects. Each section offers extensive references. (JB)

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